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The role of the United Nations in support of
the efforts of African countries to achieve
sustainable development

Draft ministerial declaration of the high-level segment submitted by the President of the Council on the basis of informal consultations

1. We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations participating in the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2001 of the Economic and Social Council, held from 16 to 18 July 2001, having considered the theme "The role of the United Nations in support of the efforts of African countries to achieve sustainable development", have adopted the following declaration.

2. We note with appreciation the priority accorded to the region in various United Nations initiatives and conferences in recent years and the emphasis placed on meeting the special needs of the continent in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.[1] In this context, we recall that we will support the consolidation of democracy in Africa and assist Africans in their struggle for lasting peace, poverty eradication and sustainable development, thereby bringing Africa into the mainstream of the world economy. We resolve therefore:

(a) To give full support to the political and institutional structures of emerging democracies in Africa;

(b) To encourage and sustain regional and subregional mechanisms for preventing conflict and promoting political stability, and to ensure a reliable flow of resources for peacekeeping operations on the continent;

(c) To take special measures to address the challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development in Africa, including debt cancellation, improved market access, enhanced official development assistance and increased flows of foreign direct investment, as well as transfer of technology;

(d) To help Africa build up its capacity to tackle the spread of the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) pandemic and other infectious diseases.

3. We call on the General Assembly to improve the process of assessing and monitoring progress in the implementation of the commitments on Africa made in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, as well as major United Nations conferences and summits, and we request the Council to play its full part in this process.

4. We recognize the efforts of African countries to promote sustainable development through the implementation of economic and political reforms in the past two decades and note with appreciation the support of the United Nations system for these efforts. However, in spite of these combined efforts, African countries still face multifaceted sustainable development challenges. We also recognize the need to promote the role of women in social and economic development, including by assuring their participation in the political and economic life of African countries. We further recognize the need for an increased focus on the rights and well-being of children, in particular their health and education.

5. We welcome the leadership efforts of African leaders to develop an African-owned and African-led framework for action towards the sustainable development of the African continent, and call on the United Nations system and the international community to support the New African Initiative recently adopted by the Organization of African Unity (OAU) at its thirty-seventh summit, held in Lusaka in July 2001. In this regard, we invite the Secretary-General to take the requisite measures to ensure an effective and coordinated response of the United Nations system to the Initiative. We acknowledge the call made by the African heads of State for a special session of the General Assembly to consider how best to support the Initiative.

6. We are convinced that the United Nations system is uniquely placed to play a key role in supporting Africa's efforts and to help create a momentum for a productive and mutually beneficial partnership between Africa and the international community and civil society, including the private sector. In this connection, we recognize the important role played by the

United Nations through its development activities in Africa. We note that while United Nations organizations have undertaken many activities in the field, particularly in the area of poverty eradication, results have not always matched expectations.

7. In order for the United Nations system to effectively support Africa's efforts towards achieving sustainable development, we consider the following to be crucial.

Integrating peace and development

8. We recognize the critical links between peace, democracy, national efforts towards the promotion of good governance, respect for all internationally recognized human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, and sustainable development in Africa. In this regard, we believe that economic growth supportive of poverty eradication and development should be at the core of conflict-prevention strategies. There should be a coordinated and comprehensive approach by all partners in order to support such economic growth, reconstruction and recovery, peace-building, national efforts in promoting good governance and strengthening the rule of law. To ensure that these links are operationalized, we call on the United Nations to do the following:

(a) Mobilize political support and resources for implementing the various United Nations poverty eradication initiatives and programmes for Africa through strengthened partnerships with African Governments, bilateral donors, the Bretton Woods institutions and civil society organizations, including the private sector;

(b) Strengthen the capacity of African Governments to make the linkages between the economic and social dimensions of poverty-reduction strategies, and assist in monitoring and analysis before and after such strategies are produced;

(c) Support African countries in promoting economic and social policies that are pro-poor and gender-sensitive, including employment and income-generating opportunities for poor people, women and youth through microfinance, community-based development and decentralization, enterprise development, food security plans, adequate nutrition and land tenure. In this connection, strengthen the "Jobs for Africa" programme;

(d) Combine peace-building, emergency assistance and longer-term development support measures in a comprehensive and coherent response in special development situations, paying particular attention to the social reintegration of displaced persons, refugees returning to their countries of origin and ex-combatants, the destruction of weapons, including anti-personnel mines, the control of small arms and light weapons, community reconciliation, strengthening and

rebuilding of democratic and other institutions, environmental regeneration and protection, and reconstruction of economic, social and physical infrastructure, ensuring that the development dimension is taken into account both at the headquarters and in the field;

(e) Explore the feasibility of creating a subregional United Nations coordinating capability, possibly by using existing United Nations regional offices, which would assist the United Nations system in setting integrated policies and strategies, ensure the harmonization of activities and lend support to national and subregional peace-building efforts and initiatives, while supporting subregional integration, and to that end to request the Secretary-General to report to the Council on the most cost-efficient and effective avenue for the creation of such capability.

9. Recognizing that the primary responsibility for successful peace-building and conflict prevention rests with Governments and is predicated on an effective cooperation between the concerned national Governments and all international partners, including the United Nations system, the international financial institutions, regional and subregional organizations, NGOs, bilateral donors, other countries and, where appropriate, the private sector, we call on all partners to take an active part in the efforts to ensure that targeted interventions are coordinated and sequenced in such a way as to enhance their impact at the country and subregional levels.

10. We recall that the General Assembly, in its resolution 55/217, requested the Council to consider the creation of an ad hoc advisory group on countries emerging from conflict with a view to assessing their humanitarian and economic needs and elaborating a long-term programme of support for implementation that begins with the integration of relief into development. In this context, we request the Secretary-General to seek the views of member States and to present a report with proposals on the mandate, composition and modalities of work of such an advisory group, taking into account those views, for the consideration of the Council within the first quarter of 2002.

Development of human capital

11. We are also deeply concerned that Africa's efforts to reverse its low human capital development are being severely challenged by a worsening health crisis, including HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other infectious diseases. We welcome the Abuja Declaration on HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Other Related Infectious Diseases, and the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, and call for their implementation in order to

support Africa's efforts in this area, including the need for generous contributions to the fight against HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases, including through a global HIV/AIDS and health fund.

12. Given the multisectoral impact of HIV/AIDS, we call on all funds, programmes and agencies which have not yet done so to mainstream AIDS prevention into their activities, paying particular attention to building national capacity to develop and implement comprehensive national strategies for HIV/AIDS prevention, care, support and treatment. We also urge the relevant organizations to assist in building national and regional capacity to tackle malaria, tuberculosis and other major diseases afflicting the region. We take note of the work of United Nations agencies, in particular the World Health Organization and the International Atomic Energy Agency, in addressing drug-resistant malaria, and also encourage the stakeholders of the Roll Back Malaria Campaign to replicate their success stories. We also welcome the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations, ongoing governmental programmes and other public-private partnerships in the health sector.

13. We assign high importance to achieving universal primary education, eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement of a basic education of good quality through such initiatives as the United Nations girls' education initiative. We are convinced that new and innovative measures should be undertaken to enable African countries to meet the international development goals in education and at the same time develop the skills required by the new knowledge-based global economy. We therefore encourage the following:

(a) The replication in low-enrolment countries in Africa of successful United Nations programmes designed to ensure the attendance and retention of children in school, in particular girls, such as the World Food Programme "Food for thought" programme;

(b) Implementation of the Dakar Framework for Action on Education for All and enhanced assistance to African countries in implementing and integrating Education for All into their national development and poverty eradication strategies, including, where appropriate, in sector-wide programmes and their poverty reduction strategy papers;

(c) Expansion of subregional capacity training programmes and advocacy for regional specialization of academic training in order to maximize synergies and resources;

(d) Concerted efforts to facilitate rapid and cost-effective development of human capital through increased, innovative and effective use of information and communication technologies in training, institutional capacity-building and education, including distance learning, technical, vocational and tertiary education;

(e) Assistance to African countries to undertake an audit of human capital development capacity needs and to devise strategies for addressing them in order to achieve the international development goals, including evaluation of efforts so far made to build such capacity in Africa.

14. We also encourage all partners to support United Nations-assisted and other relevant networks and centres of excellence, and urge them to provide incentives to private enterprise to facilitate the transfer of technology to African countries and to assist with the development of their science and technology capacity.

Environment and development

15. We recognize the importance of the integration of environmental concerns into policies designed to support economic and social development, and emphasize the role that sustainable use and management of resources can play in achieving sustainable development. We also recognize the importance of addressing in an interrelated and mutually supportive manner the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Agriculture and food security

16. We recognize the critical links between agriculture, increased food production, access to food, agricultural diversification and rural development, and enhancing food security. In this regard, we strongly call for:

(a) Strengthened measures by and enhanced assistance to the African countries in their fight against land degradation, drought and desertification, and by multilateral and bilateral donors and through public and private partnerships;

(b) Accelerated implementation of all water-related operational activities of the United Nations system related to increasing access to safe water for household and agricultural use;

(c) The support for and replication of success stories being coordinated and implemented by the United Nations system, including support for research on drought-resistant staple crops, such as the "New rice for Africa" project and the control of the tsetse fly;

(d) Advocacy by the United Nations system for trade rules that promote food security, including through fair market access for agricultural products, and the implementation of the Marrakech Decision on Measures Concerning the Possible Negative Effects of the Reform Programme on Least Developed and Net Food-Importing Developing Countries;[2]

(e) Due priority in domestic and external resource mobilization for agricultural and rural development, including the provision of infrastructure and the inclusion of food, agriculture and rural development in the poverty reduction strategy paper process, where appropriate;

(f) Promotion of measures to increase food production and access to food, land, credit and technology;

(g) Support the efforts of Governments to review, as appropriate, their ongoing national food security policies with a view to filling gaps, identifying and removing obstacles and taking adequate measures;

(h) Reaffirm the goal to halve the number of those suffering from hunger by 2015, and include the goal as part of poverty eradication programmes and relevant initiatives for Africa.

Diversification of African economies

17. We recognize the role that increased diversification and competitiveness of economies can play in promoting sustained economic growth and sustainable development and poverty eradication in African countries. Consequently, we call for:

(a) Support for the development of enterprises in the manufacturing, services and other sectors, including small and medium-sized enterprises, in order to increase the value of production and trade, including processing of primary commodities of the region, and moving into higher value-added resource-based industries;

(b) Further support for the implementation of Africa's industrialization strategies, particularly the Alliance for Africa's Industrialization;

(c) Promotion of effective linkages between manufacturing industries and agriculture in order to properly use agro-industrial opportunities for development;

(d) Further actions to address high transaction costs.

Mobilization of resources for development

18. We are gravely concerned that if current trends continue the majority of African countries will be unable to achieve the international development goals, including those reaffirmed by the

United Nations Millennium Declaration. In this context, the urgent mobilization of domestic and external resources is required if African countries are to reverse the rising tide of poverty. The United Nations system should therefore:

(a) Upon request, provide policy advice on appropriate domestic strategies to mobilize domestic resources and attract foreign investment, for example in the areas of improved revenue collection, improved intermediation of savings and investment, measures for encouraging the return of flight capital while providing technical assistance to strengthen key institutions, assisting in building capacity to attract and service domestic and foreign investors, and improving public financial management and fighting corruption in the public and private sectors;

(b) Strengthen the capacity of African countries to monitor and manage their debt;

(c) Assist African Governments, upon request, in expanding the formal sector of the economy in order to, inter alia, increase economic growth and broaden the tax base;

(d) Develop joint programmes for assisting African countries in the formulation and implementation of national and subregional diversification strategies that would lead to the expansion of trade and increased export earnings;

(e) Support the efforts of African countries to overcome supply-side constraints, and in this regard contribute to strengthening trade-related technical assistance to enhance their participation in the multilateral trading system, paying particular attention to helping African countries to reach internationally agreed technical standards through, inter alia, the implementation of the Integrated Framework for Trade-related Technical Assistance for Least Developed Countries. Help African countries to build capacities in order to participate effectively in any multilateral trade negotiations and in order to address the implementation concerns of developing countries;

(f) Expand its network of partnerships with the private sector and foundations so as to secure additional sources of funding for poverty eradication programmes. In this regard, we assert that these additional funds are complementary to and not a substitute for official development assistance (ODA);

(g) Assist African countries, where appropriate, in enhancing their absorptive capacity for international development assistance, including ODA.

19. We recognize that the support of the international community, especially the donor community, is necessary to maximize the impact of the actions of the United Nations system to increase resources for development. We also recognize that, despite the positive effects that an enabling environment with good governance, sound macroeconomic policies and efficient management of public revenue and expenditure, can achieve in terms of mobilization of local resources, external finance, in particular ODA, will remain, for African countries, a critical resource for achieving the international development goals. Consequently, we call for:

(a) Strengthened efforts by developed countries to meet as soon as possible the ODA targets of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product (GNP) and the targets of earmarking 0.15 per cent to 0.20 per cent of GNP for the least developed countries, as agreed, and to grant more generous development assistance, including voluntary contributions to core resources of United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, to African countries for their sustainable development, in particular poverty eradication programmes;

(b) The effective and improved coordination of the delivery of ODA by all development partners;

(c) The implementation of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development-Development Assistance Committee recommendation on the untying of aid to least developed countries;

(d) The full, speedy and effective implementation of the enhanced heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative for eligible African countries through new and additional resources, as needed, and the adoption by eligible countries of the policy measures required to join the initiative, while stressing the importance of continued flexibility with regard to the eligibility criteria for the enhanced HIPC initiative, in particular for countries in post-conflict situations;

(e) Advance the development dimension of international trade and accelerate the beneficial integration of African countries into the global economy, including by improving and ensuring preferential and effective market access, and by encouraging action that would enhance the diversification of African economies with the goal of increasing the predictability of earnings, greater economic security, poverty eradication and greater domestic savings;

(f) Particular attention to the special needs of Africa in the International Conference on Financing for Development, in the context of assisting the region in meeting the international development goals.

Harmonization and coordination of development assistance to Africa

20. We welcome the recent emphasis in the development community on the need to work collaboratively to enhance the impact of development assistance, especially as regards those activities geared towards poverty eradication. The United Nations can play an important role in fostering harmonization and coordination of bilateral and multilateral development cooperation activities in support of national plans and programmes. In order to more effectively play this role, the Secretary-General should ensure that all the programmes and activities of the United Nations are coordinated with a view to reducing the transaction costs of its operational activities in Africa. The United Nations can do so by further strengthening coordination through:

(a) Strengthening the resident coordinator system, accelerating and harmonization of programming cycles, and aligning and simplifying the rules and procedures used by the various funds, programmes and specialized agencies;

(b) Encouraging the use of joint programmes, where appropriate, by the United Nations organizations, as has been effectively demonstrated by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS at the global and field levels;

(c) Strengthening complementarity between coordination frameworks, such as the common country assessment, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the poverty reduction strategy paper, where they exist, encouraging strengthened and systematic cooperation between the United Nations and the World Bank based on their respective competencies, mandates and comparative advantage, in support of nationally owned strategies towards sustainable development.

21. To increase the effectiveness of its own coordination and to enhance the impact of the work of all partners in the field, the United Nations should encourage:

(a) The more active involvement of bilateral donors in coordination at the field level, inter alia, by using the United Nations common country assessment as a way of promoting policy coherence and joining streamlined thematic groups;

(b) All other non-United Nations partners, including bilateral and multilateral, to make efforts to harmonize the implementation of their initiatives and/or development cooperation activities at the national and regional levels within the context of long-term and comprehensive plans and programmes.

22. We welcome the decision taken by the Administrative Committee on Coordination to redirect United Nations system operational activities in Africa towards supporting African-led regional initiatives and to ensure a better integrated coordination of those activities with national development policies and programmes. To support and strengthen the leading role of African countries in coordinating assistance, the Secretary-General should:

(a) Ensure system-wide support for strengthening of local capacity and institutions to better mobilize and coordinate development assistance;

(b) Promote stronger inter-agency coordination at the headquarters, regional, subregional and national levels, while bringing on board other partners with regional and subregional programmes to work closely with the United Nations system, in particular the Economic Commission for Africa and OAU;

(c) Encourage Governments and their development partners to coordinate and harmonize their development activities based on national development strategies, inter alia, by utilizing sector-wide approaches;

(d) Ensure that United Nations policies and operational activities fit into a framework that integrates peace and development, as reaffirmed in section VII of the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

Partnerships for development

23. We believe that public-private partnerships can bring additional technical and financial resources to support African initiatives in health, education, science and technology development, and urge United Nations organizations to expand their partnerships with global civil society, including foundations, the private sector and NGOs. We also call for strengthened public-private partnerships to support these priority areas, as well as infrastructure, particularly transport, energy supply, and information and communications. With regard to the latter, we urge the United Nations ICT Task Force and the Group of Eight Major Industrialized Countries Digital Opportunity Task Force to support African initiatives geared towards narrowing the digital divide, including through mobilizing resources, as appropriate.

24. We call for increased South-South and triangular cooperation, and in this regard note the critical importance of enhanced support for such cooperation to maximizing the benefits of such cooperation in providing African countries with technical assistance in such areas as ICT, education, professional training, health and capacity-building.

25. We welcome the dialogue between the Group of Eight and representatives from Africa, including at the highest level, and invite the Group of Eight to maintain the dialogue to ensure that the challenges facing the region are given due attention on a regular basis.

United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s

26. We believe that the preparatory process for the final review and appraisal of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, scheduled for September 2002, presents an opportunity for an assessment of the role the United Nations and the international community have played in supporting Africa's priorities, including a comprehensive review of initiatives on Africa. In considering the final review, the General Assembly should take into account how best to improve the effectiveness of United Nations support for Africa's priorities and initiatives, bearing in mind the Secretary-General's 1998 report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. We also request the Secretary-General to review the structures charged with follow up at the Secretariat level.

Notes

[1] General Assembly resolution 55/2.

[2] See The Results of the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations, International Legal Materials, vol. 33 (1994).